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ARTICLES:

(1) Editorial: Enemy strike argument requires calm and thorough discussion

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
July 12, 2006

"In order to defend the people within the context of the Constitution, there is every reason for Japan to have a limited capability to (strike an enemy country) as an independent country."

These words came from Defense Agency Director-General Fukushiro Nukaga in a press conference following the launch of ballistic missiles by North Korea.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe also said, "We need to study that option at all times." Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe also echoed Nukaga's view.

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In contrast, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi called for caution, while acknowledging the need for discussion. The New Komeito is dismissive of the argument, saying, "Striking an enemy base will turn into an all-out war."

The Hatoyama cabinet presented the enemy strike argument for the first time in 1956 as the government's view. Logic behind the argument is that striking an enemy base in response to an attack on Japan with a guided missile or other weapon constitutes an act of self-defense as long as there is no other means for defense. It is a classic yet new argument.

Japan basically takes an exclusively defense-oriented policy, which means to: (1) take defensive action only after being attacked by another country; and (2) maintain a defense capability at a minimum level.

For this reason, Japan has refrained from possessing intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range strategic bombers, and attack aircraft carriers. Japan's defense strategy in time of a national emergency is to let the Self-Defense Forces take defensive action and leave the offensive action to the US military.

Japan has provided US Forces Japan with bases in accordance with the bilateral security treaty. Role sharing between Japan and the United

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States is specified in the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation. Japan has also improved the law to extend logistical support to US forces in action in areas surrounding Japan.

In order for Japan to introduce offensive weapons based on the enemy strike argument, the nation's strictly defense-oriented policy must be turned around. It would also be necessary to review the realignment of US forces in Japan, to which the defense chief also agreed. The nature of the Japan-US alliance would also change. An independent defense argument may arise in the end.

If that is the case, Japan in strengthening its defense capability, would have to give up its status as a "peaceful nation." Other Asian countries may regard Japan as a threat. Japan's peace diplomacy based on the bitter WWII lesson may also fall apart.

North Korea has reportedly deployed 200 Rodong missiles, which have Japan in their range. That country has also declared it possesses nuclear weapons. The abduction issue, too, remains unsettled. Needless to say, North Korea remains a major threat to Japan.

North Korea launched ballistic missiles in defiance of repeated warnings. The Japanese people are frustrated and irritated with a lack of effective means to cope with the intimidating missile launches. Some may have questions about the rigid defense-oriented argument. There is need to discuss how to deal with the new intimidating situation.

Nukaga's statement sounds farfetched, however. His comment includes crucial aspects, such as how to sort out the relationship with the US-Japan Security Treaty. A conclusion must not be reached so easily.

Rational and thorough discussion is necessary in view of the new situation and the country's defense capability.

(2) Gov't begins studying strike on enemy country; Ruling parties out of step

In the wake of North Korea's recent firing of missiles, the government has entered into a full-fledged study of striking an enemy country to pound its missile sites before they fire missiles. The study is based on the government's unified view adopted in the days of Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama's cabinet. The government's position in the unified view is that it is not the spirit of the Constitution of Japan to wait for self-destruction while doing nothing if and when there is a country that is obviously intent to aggress against Japan. Defense Agency Director General Fukushiro Nukaga has declared that the government would discuss the matter. In point of fact, however, it is impossible for the Self-Defense Forces to strike an enemy country as long as the SDF's equipment remains at the present level. In the meantime, the ruling parties are getting out of step over the advisability of striking enemy bases.

"It's all right to study this matter while theoretically anticipating various cases," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters on the evening of July 10 when he was asked about Nukaga's remarks that touched on the possibility of striking an enemy country. At the same time, however, Koizumi also suggested the need for the government to remain cautious in its study of the option,

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saying: "It's quite difficult to find out whether they will attack Japan. It's different from a preemptive strike."

In 1956, when the Hatoyama cabinet was in office, the government deemed it possible to strike an enemy country.

After that, however, the government tabooed the notion of striking an enemy land. And even now, 50 years later, the government still has no clear-cut guidelines to deem it possible to strike an enemy land.

In January 2003, Defense Agency Director General Shigeru Ishiba stated before the Diet that Japan might be allowed to strike an enemy country if and when that country has "a clear intention to aggress against Japan" and in case that country has "set a missile on a launch pad or is preparing to fuel a missile." However, Japan cannot strike any missile site in North Korea as long as North Korea prepares to test-fire a missile with a hidden intention to attack Japan.

Then, is the SDF capable of striking North Korea's bases?

"It's possible under legal theory," Defense Agency Administrative Deputy Director General Takemasa Moriya said in a press conference on July 10. "But," Moriya went on, "Japan expects the United States to strike enemy bases." In 1997, Japan and the United States revised their guidelines for bilateral defense cooperation. The new version of the defense guidelines stipulates that "US forces will consider, as necessary, the use of forces providing additional strike power" in case Japan comes under a missile attack.

In the press conference, Moriya cited some reasons for that: 1) Japan does not have any missiles that can reach North Korea; 2) Japan does not have any attack aircraft that can fly to and back from an enemy base; and 3) Japan does not have any aircraft that can dodge enemy radar.

However, there are arguments even within the Defense Agency over whether the SDF is really incapable of striking an enemy land.

In April last year, Defense Agency Director General Yoshinori Ono revealed that the Defense Agency in 1994 simulated Air Self-Defense Force fighter jets' strike on a missile base in North Korea. According to Ono, the ASDF answered that its fighters would be able to strike a North Korean missile site if they try.

In that simulation, however, the Defense Agency anticipated that ASDF attack fighters would have to land at a US military base in South Korea if they run out of fuel and that their pilots may have to be ejected over the Sea of Japan. "It wouldn't be a realistic

mission," one senior official of the Defense Agency said.

Meanwhile, the Defense Agency has now decided to introduce tanker aircraft needed for fighter jets to make longer flights. Last year, the agency planned technology research for long-range guided missiles that can strike an enemy land. However, the New Komeito party, a coalition partner of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, raised an objection to this planned technology research. Eventually, it was not incorporated in the agency's midterm defense buildup program. The agency still cannot expect to go ahead with its feasibility study of long-range guided missile technology.

Opposition parties are cautious about Nukaga's remarks. In addition,

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there are also cautious arguments from within the ruling coalition.

LDP Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe gave high marks to Nukaga's remarks. "We know they will fire missiles," Takebe said. He added: "Even so, do we do nothing? That's unacceptable. We should make positive efforts if we need to legislate measures."

However, New Komeito President Takenori Kanzaki voiced a negative view on July 10. "Theoretically, there are various ideas," Kanzaki said. "But," he also said, "that would mean a full-scale war (in the case of striking a North Korean missile base)." He added, "So the government should remain cautious in its study." Another New Komeito executive said, "Japan may have to acquire that capability in time, but it's dangerous to go for it." This executive also said, "So we will apply the brakes."

(3) North Korea's missile launches boosts Abe's political identity; Is Koizumi urging Abe to heighten his awareness?

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
July 12, 2006

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, who is regarded as the most likely candidate to succeed Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, has rapidly boosted his political identity in the government by his diplomatic handling of the fallout from North Korea's ballistic missile launches. He is now serving as acting prime minister since Koizumi left yesterday for a seven-day trip to the Middle East and Russia. With the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election coming up in September, the Prime Minister's office has already taken an aspect of being under Abe's control.

The government has unusually taken a tough stance toward the North's missile launches. Many point out the presence of Abe, known for his hard-line stance toward North Korea, as the reason for Tokyo's strong stand toward Pyongyang.

Japan has submitted to the UN Security Council a resolution calling for sanctions on North Korea. Abe said that China's proposal for issuing a nonbinding chairman's statement "is meaningless." He has continued seeking an adoption of the resolution.

Abe has been engaged with negotiations with US National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley and US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer since June. He promised to support the US resolution even though Washington was concerned about whether Japan would go along with it. Abe's thorough preparations have brought about Japan's tough stance, supported by close cooperation with the United States.

Abe also played an important role in imposing Japan's independent sanctions against Pyongyang, including a ban on North Korean freighter Man Gyong Bong 92's entry into Japanese ports.

In a meeting on July 4 a day before the North test-fired missiles, a government official proposed prohibiting the North Korean freighter from entering Japanese ports only when a missile flew over Japan, but Abe turned down the proposal, saying, "North Korea has already had a yellow card due to its abductions of Japanese nationals." The meeting held at the Prime Minister's office decided to ban Man Gyong Bong 92 from entering Japanese ports even when a missile dropped into the Sea of Japan.

There are no signs that Prime Minister Koizumi has given Abe any

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specific instructions, even though Abe reports to him. Koizumi appears to have entrusted the handling of the issue to Abe.

It seems that Koizumi is trying to impress audiences at home and abroad that Abe would be able to head the Prime Minister's office by letting Abe handle the missile issue and serve as his proxy during his overseas trip. Koizumi is believed to think of Abe as his successor. He is probably urging Abe to boost his consciousness.

Abe underscored that he was prepared for the role, saying, "As acting prime minister, I will handle matters responsibly."

(4) Interview with Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Takenaka on Koizumi reforms over five years: Prime minister demonstrates leadership in policymaking, but concerned about change in nature of policy panel

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 4) (Full)
July 11, 2006

-- Has the situation in recent discussions at the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy changed?

"I think the Finance Ministry's intentions have been strongly reflected in recent debates, and I have complained about it. Under such a situation, the panel would find it difficult to play the role of an engine.

In pursuing the task of reforming both expenditures and revenues, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has demonstrated leadership as a powerful engine under the prime minister and centered on the Policy Research Council chairman. The prime minister has exerted leadership, but he takes a different style on each occasion."

-- Some say they are satisfied at the party serving as an engine to promote the reform drive.

-- I think that is a high-level political judgment. In carrying out reforms at the initiative of politicians, it would be ideal for the party to take the lead. In order to make the panel serve as an engine, the prime minister's strong leadership and cohesiveness in managing it are essential. It might be correct to think that this was possible under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi. It has been proved that the policy council can be used as a tool, if desired. The next leader supposedly will be required to skillfully make use of the party, the government, and the council for different tasks."

-- Some critics denounce the top-down management in the council as dictatorial.

"As a result of Prime Minister Koizumi's reform efforts, reactionary forces have gained considerable influence. Roughly classified, there are three types of forces. First, the reinvigoration of the bureaucracy can be listed. Over the past five years, dissatisfaction built up in the heart of bureaucrats. There are many things that Prime Minister Koizumi and the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy have done over the opposition of government officials, such as postal privatization, the disposal of nonperforming loans, economic and fiscal management, and regulatory reform.

Secondly, there are moves against globalization and market-oriented economic reform efforts. The Japanese economy has finally recovered

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enough to compete on an international scale over the past five years. If the reform drive is slowed down now, Japan will become less competitive in the world market. The government must deal severely with such illegal activities as the Livedoor and Murakami Fund scandals. That is why I feel regret when I hear some saying

that regulatory reform is wrong.

Resistance to a change of generation can be cited as the third force. In China, those who were born in the 1960s and graduated from college in the 1980s, securing key posts, have taken the lead in promoting reforms. Such a trend has yet to occur in Japan."

-- Somewhat fed up with the ongoing reforms, the public now harbor a grievance and a sense of anxiety, don't they?

"It is true that many people cannot control their uneasiness and hide their pent-up feelings. To my regret, although the economy has emerged from its worst state, the effect of the improvement has yet to reach all the population. The government is now being put to the test as to whether it will uphold the reform initiative on both political and economic fronts.

-- The challenge of reforming spending and revenues will be left to the next administration as its homework.

"The key point is whether priority is given to economic policy or fiscal policy. If priority is given to fiscal policy, when the economic situation becomes serious, the government will increase public works projects. When faced a fiscal deficit, it will hike taxes. But I have insisted in the Koizumi cabinet that priority should be given to economic policy. I take the view that the government, when faced with an economic recession, should promote the disposal of nonperforming loans and regulatory reform as measures to buoy up the economy, without relying on public works.

Unless tax hikes are minimized, the people will not be convinced, and the economy will not improve, either. Four years ago, when the nation's financial deficit reached its peak, the primary balance shortfall totaled 28 trillion yen. This figure has dropped to below 14 trillion now. This result is owing to the economic policy measures the government has so far taken, even without raising the consumption tax rate. In its debates since early this year, the policy panel has apparently had a bias toward increasing taxes.

(5) Elimination of factional influence: Abe secretly asked Yuji Yamamoto, chairman of Parliamentary League to Support Second Chance, in March to support challenge for LDP presidential race

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
July 11, 2006

Yuji Yamamoto, director general of the Accounting Bureau of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe were sitting face to face at a Japanese restaurant near the Diet building in mid-March. At the time, Abe still did not clarify his intention to run in the LDP presidential race. Soon after the meal and drinks were served, Abe calmly spoke to Yamamoto: "I plan to run in the presidential election. Would you mind pulling together some young party members?

Yamamoto, surprised at Abe's straightforward remark, automatically questioned: "Are you really going to run? You won't give up in the middle, will you?"

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"I am resolved to run in the race," Abe replied as if a further confirmation was needed. This was the primary reason for the setting up of a "Parliamentary League to Support a Second Chance," comprised of junior and mid-level lawmakers who support Abe.

Yamamoto, now serving in his sixth-term in the Diet, belongs to the faction led by former Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura. In the 2003 LDP presidential election, he backed Komura. The faction has only 16 members, but Komura secured 54 votes in the end. It was difficult then for Yamamoto to get endorsement of 20 lawmakers, the number needed to run in the LDP presidential race. Yamamoto went through much trouble.

Yamamoto later began to think that it would be good for the party and its lawmakers to select a president based on personal decisions,

eliminating factional influence, Abe then approached him. A lawmaker close to Abe said, "Mr. Abe had his eyes on Yamamoto's efforts in the previous presidential election, and for that reason, he seems to have recruited him."

The government's Council for Promotion of Second Chance is a perfect tool to organize support by keeping a distance from the presidential race. Yamamoto sought Komura's approval, saying, "Mr. Abe is from Yamaguchi Prefecture where you come from." He then started moving into action in early May. Yoshihide Suga, senior vice minister of internal affairs and communications, acted as liaison between Abe and Yamamoto. They were able to collect the endorsement of 20 lawmakers (two later withdrew) in just one week.

Those who played the leading role were Yamamoto, Suga, a Koga-Niwa faction member, who is now serving in his fourth term in the Diet, Hiroshi Kajiyama, a third-terminer with no factional allegiance, and Isshu Sugawara, who belongs to no faction and is serving in his second term in the Diet. The selection of members impressed other because there was no factional influence, and the members represented generational change. A total of 94 junior and mid-level lawmakers (including lawmakers with no factional allegiance) from seven factions attended the first meeting of the parliamentary league on June 2 when Yamamoto assumed its chairmanship. The number of participants indicated how high the expectations of junior to mid-level lawmakers are of Abe.

However, existing factions and veteran lawmakers reacted strongly to that new development. The second meeting, planned for mid-June, was delayed to sometime after the end of the regular Diet session.

On June 16, Yamamoto called on former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori at his office since Mori had expressed displeasure with the parliamentary league, concerned that the group's moves might provoke a standoff with his favorite Yasuo Fukuda.

Yamamoto said to Mori, "If Mr. Fukuda decides not to run, I would like you to support Mr. Abe." Mori responded, however, "We don't know whether Mr. Fukuda will run or not." Many in the party already saw the parliamentary league as working toward the formation of a government led by Abe.

Abe stated that he would announce his candidacy in mid-August or later. Yamamoto and other members plan to set out on a stumping tour of regional areas late this month. They plan to hold meetings with local government official as an opening move to secure rank-and-file member votes.

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When and where the league will hold its second meeting is crucial for Abe in his drive to assume the prime minister's post.

SCHIEFFER